



Alaska WIC Vendor Newsletter

February 2015 — Volume 13, Issue 1

VENDOR TELECONFERENCES:

Please make sure a Manager or WIC Trainer attends one of the following teleconferences.



Tuesday,
March 3rd
10:00am
AKST



Wednesday,
March 4th
10:00am
AKST

1 (800) 281-5354
Passcode: 6467256

Interactive vendor training is required by federal regulations. This is your opportunity to get updates and ask your questions!



PRICE SURVEYS: Included with this newsletter is your 2015 Winter Price Survey which is due on Friday, February 27, 2015. We highly suggest you begin as soon as possible to allow time for corrections if needed. This price survey requires you to indicate your highest priced WIC approved item for each food listed. Electronic Exemption forms must be submitted and approved prior to February 27th.

Yogurt, White Potatoes Approved for June 1, 2015

WIC participants will be allowed to buy yogurt and white potatoes with WIC checks beginning on **June 1, 2015**. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved the addition of yogurt to states' approved foods lists in 2014, but made the addition effective in April 2015 to allow time for planning.

Alaska will allow **lowfat and nonfat plain yogurt in a 32 oz. size**, including most major brands. Organic yogurt and Greek yogurt will not be allowed. Yogurt will be able to be purchased only if it is specified on the WIC check.

The Vendor Management Unit will collect stores' shelf prices for plain yogurt beginning with the Winter Price Survey. We are still considering whether to require vendors to carry a minimum stock of plain yogurt. However, we will not allow an exemption from stocking at least one approved yogurt brand.

The U.S. Congress passed legislation in December 2014 that allows white potatoes to be purchased with Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs). Starting on **June 1**, the Alaska WIC Program will allow fresh white potatoes, and eligible canned and frozen white potatoes to be purchased with FVVs. We will provide more guidance to vendors, and a new Approved Food List / Participant ID booklet, in April.

WIC Shelf Labels

Alaska WIC encourages all vendors to use WIC shelf labels, or "shelf talkers," to identify eligible foods for participants. Shelf labels are more than a convenience for participants – by helping WIC shoppers locate food items that match their checks, a vendor saves time and avoids confusion at the cash register. Cashiers and participants have a better experience, and that encourages participants to shop at your location for all of their food needs.

When using shelf tags, they must be placed next to the store's own shelf label and used consistently throughout the store. If an item is moved, the WIC shelf tag needs to move with it. If you need shelf labels, please contact the Vendor Management Unit at (907)465-3100, or WIC@alaska.gov.



Cost Containment Project Survey

If you received the Alaska Rural Vendor Survey and completed it, we'd like to thank you for taking the time to work through all of the questions. As explained in the survey instructions, no data from the survey will be linked to individual stores or companies. The information will be used to support our application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service to use alternative measures to keep program food costs down,

If you have any additional information or ideas about Alaska's business environment or cost containment for WIC foods, please contact Sandy Harbanuk, Vendor Coordinator, at (907)465-3100, or wic@alaska.gov.

Vendor Reauthorizations

The Alaska WIC Program authorizes vendors for a three-year period. All current Vendor Agreements will expire on September 30, 2015. We will mail a vendor application to all vendors who are in good standing as of August 19, 2015.

This is a good time to make sure that you have a current Alaska Business License and that it has your current store name. Your store's authorization as a SNAP vendor and any health certificates or other state requirements will also need to be up-to-date. Your June 2015 price survey will be used to determine whether your prices for WIC food items are consistent with any new cost containment structure that is approved by USDA.

Please pay close attention to the following three most common preventable rejection reasons and ask for training, if needed. The following numbers are for October thru December.

262

Missing participant's signature

Please remember that our WIC participants pay with WIC checks and **ALL checks** require a signature to be reimbursable. Depositing a check without a signature is a fatal error and cannot be re-deposited.

148

Missing sale date

Without a sale date we have no way of verifying if a check was used during the valid dates. The check will be rejected unless the store endorses the back with a sale date.

104

Altered or Correction Added

When correcting an error, do not scribble out the wrong date or sale amount. Instead, draw one single line through the incorrect date or amount, write the correct date or amount in the box and add your initials.

Please call our office at (907) 465-3100 before depositing any questionable checks. If you have rejected checks that you believe should not have been rejected you may submit a WIC Check Appeal Request Form directly to our State Office in Juneau.

IMPORTANT Food News!

Infant Foods:



Gerber has increased the size of its 2-pack plastic tubs from 3.5 oz. to 4 oz. This increases the product size by 0.5 oz., and the new containers will begin appearing on shelves in March. The increased amount will help WIC participants get the full amount of infant food on their checks, and it will be easier to train store employees to verify the eligible amount for purchase. An example of the new packaging:

1% and Fat-free UHT milk:

Thank you to all vendors for responding to the requirement to carry a minimum stock of low fat and fat-free UHT milk. The reduction in whole milk prescriptions for WIC participants is part of USDA's effort to address obesity, about which the U.S. Centers for Disease Control states:

Research has shown that as people become "overweight" and "obese," their risk for developing the following conditions increases:

Coronary heart disease

Type 2 diabetes

Cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon)

Hypertension (high blood pressure)

Dyslipidemia (for example, high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)

Stroke

Liver and Gallbladder disease

Sleep apnea and breathing problems

Osteoarthritis (a breakdown of cartilage and bone within a joint)

Gynecological problems (abnormal periods, infertility)

We will allow an exemption from carrying either 1% or Fat-free UHT *only* if a vendor can show that they can consistently maintain a stock amount of FRESH 1% or Fat-free milk at all times.

UHT substitution for fresh milk: UHT is an allowable substitution in place of fresh fluid milk for vendors who have a fresh milk exemption. For remote rural vendors who already have a fresh milk exemption, please contact Erin Khmelev, Assistant Vendor Coordinator, if you are concerned that the UHT substitution may affect your WIC check reimbursements. Remote rural vendors may also contact Erin to apply for a fresh milk exemption.

Health and Social Services

Alaska WIC Program
Div. of Public
Assistance
P.O. Box 110612
Juneau, AK 99811

Phone: 907-465-3100
Fax: 907-465-3416
E-mail:

Managers-

Please post this newsletter
for your staff to read



NEW !

Your store will soon receive new WIC Accepted Here Posters.

Once you receive the new poster please destroy any old versions and replace them with the new one!



**No Rain
Checks
Allowed**

Contacting the WIC Vendor Unit

The Vendor Unit will provide assistance to vendors at any time. For questions or complaints, please contact us and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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907/465-4704

Erin Khmelev

Assistant Vendor Coordinator
Erin.khmelev@alaska.gov
907/465-8630

IF YOU FIND LOST CHECKS: Please notify your local WIC agency or the State Office immediately at (907) 465-3100 so the checks can be returned to the participant.

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